

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 3701

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, HO
SUBJ: LIBERAL PARTY CONVENTION AGREES ON PARTY UNITY AND APPROVES

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 308

1. SUMMARY: IN A THREE DAY EXTRAORDINARY CONVENTION, THE LIBERAL PARTY AMENDED ITS STATUTES TO ACCORD WITH ELECTORAL LAW REQUIREMENTS. PERHAPS MORE IMPORTANTLY, THE VARIOUS FACTIONS OF THE LIBERAL PARTY APPARENTLY RESOLVED THEIR DIFFERENCES. HOWEVER, MODESTO RODAS ALSO DEMONSTRATED HE COMMANDS LOYALTY OF PARTY MAJORITY. THE CONVENTION IS ANOTHER INDICATION OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS INCREASING MOMENTUM. END SUMMARY.

2. OVER 500 DELEGATES ATTENDED THE LIBERAL PARTY (PLH) EXTRAORDINARY CONVENTION JUNVENTION JULY 28-30 CALLED TO AMEND PARTY STATUTES TO ACCORD WITH ARTILE 17 OF THE ELECTORAL LAW (REFTEL). (ARTILE 17 REQUIRES THE TWO PARTIES ALREADY REGISTERED, THE PLH AND PNH, TO REFORM THEIR INTERNAL STATUTES TO PROVIDE FOR REPRESENTATION IN PARTY MACHINERY OF THE VARIOUS FACTIONS PROPORTIONAL
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TO THEIR GRASS-ROOTS STRENGTH AS DEMONSTRATED IN PRIMARY-TYPE PARTY ELECTIONS. THE PNH HELD ITS CONVENTION SEVERAL MONTHS AGO, BUT HAS HELD OFF SUBMITTING ITS NEW STATUTES TO THE NATIONAL ELECTORAL TRIBUNAL FOR APPROVAL, APPARENTLY WAITING TO SEE WHAT THE PLH DOES.)

3. PERHAPS MORE IMPORTANTLY, THE VARIOUS FACTIONS OF THE LIBERAL

PARTY REACHED AGREEMENT ON BOTH THE AMENDED STATUTES AND A FORMULA FOR REPRESENTATION OF EACH GROUP'S MEMBERS THAT MEANS APPARENT PARTY UNITY. THE CONVENTION ENDED IN SMILES AND UNITY.

4. NEVERTHELESS, MODESTO RODAS AND HIS SUPPORTERS WERE FIRMLY IN CONTROL OF THE CONVENTION AND HAD A CLEAR MAJORITY OF DELEGATES. THEY TOOK A CONCILIATORY LINE TOWARDS THE DEMOCRATIC LEFT (ALIPO) FACTION OF CARLOS ROBERTO REINA AND THE GROUP LOYAL TO JORGE BUESO ARIAS, THE PARTY'S 1971 STANDARD BEARER.

5. THE LIBERAL PARTY'S NEW FOUND UNITY MAY TURN OUT TO BE LESS THAN SOLID. MANY BUESO SUPPORTERS ARE STILL BITTER OVER RODAS' SITTING OUT THE 1971 ELECTIONS WHICH THEY FELT WOULD HAVE BEEN WON HAD THE PARTY BEEN UNITED. IT IS A LIBERAL PARTY ARTICLE OF FAITH THAT IT IS THE MAJORITY PARTY OF THE COUNTRY AND CAN, IF UNITED, WIN ANY HONEST ELECTION. ONE WIDELY ACCEPTED CLAIM MAINTAINS NATIONAL PARTY STRONGMAN RICARDO ZUNIGA WAS SO CERTAIN OF BUESO'S IMPENDING VICTORY THAT HE RAN THE UNEXPECTED WINNER, RAMON CRUZ, AS A SACRIFICIAL OFFERING TO THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS.

6. COMMENT: MODESTO RODAS WAS THE PLH CANDIDATE IN 1963 AND THIS CONVENTION DEMONSTRATED HE STILL COMMANDS THE LOYALTY OF THE MAJORITY OF THE PARTY. IN SPITE OF RECENT CONCILIATORY STATEMENTS DIRECTED AT THE ARMED FORCES, MANY PERSONS DOUBT RODAS IS ANY MORE ACCEPTABLE TO THE MILITARY NOW THAN HE WAS IN 1963 WHEN VILLEDA
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MORALES WAS OVERTHROWN TEN DAYS BEFORE ELECTIONS TO PREVENT WHAT WAS ASSUMED TO BE A CERTAIN RODAS VICTORY. THERE SEEMS TO BE NO SERIOUS DOUBT, HOWEVER, THAT THE AMENDED STATUTES WILL BE APPROVED BY THE NATIONAL ELECTORAL TRIBUNAL. THE CONVENTION WAS NOISY, WELL ATTENDED, AND UNFETTERED, ANOTHER INDICATION OF THE INCREASING POLITICAL INTEREST AS THE ELECTORAL PROCESS GATHERS MOMENTUM.
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